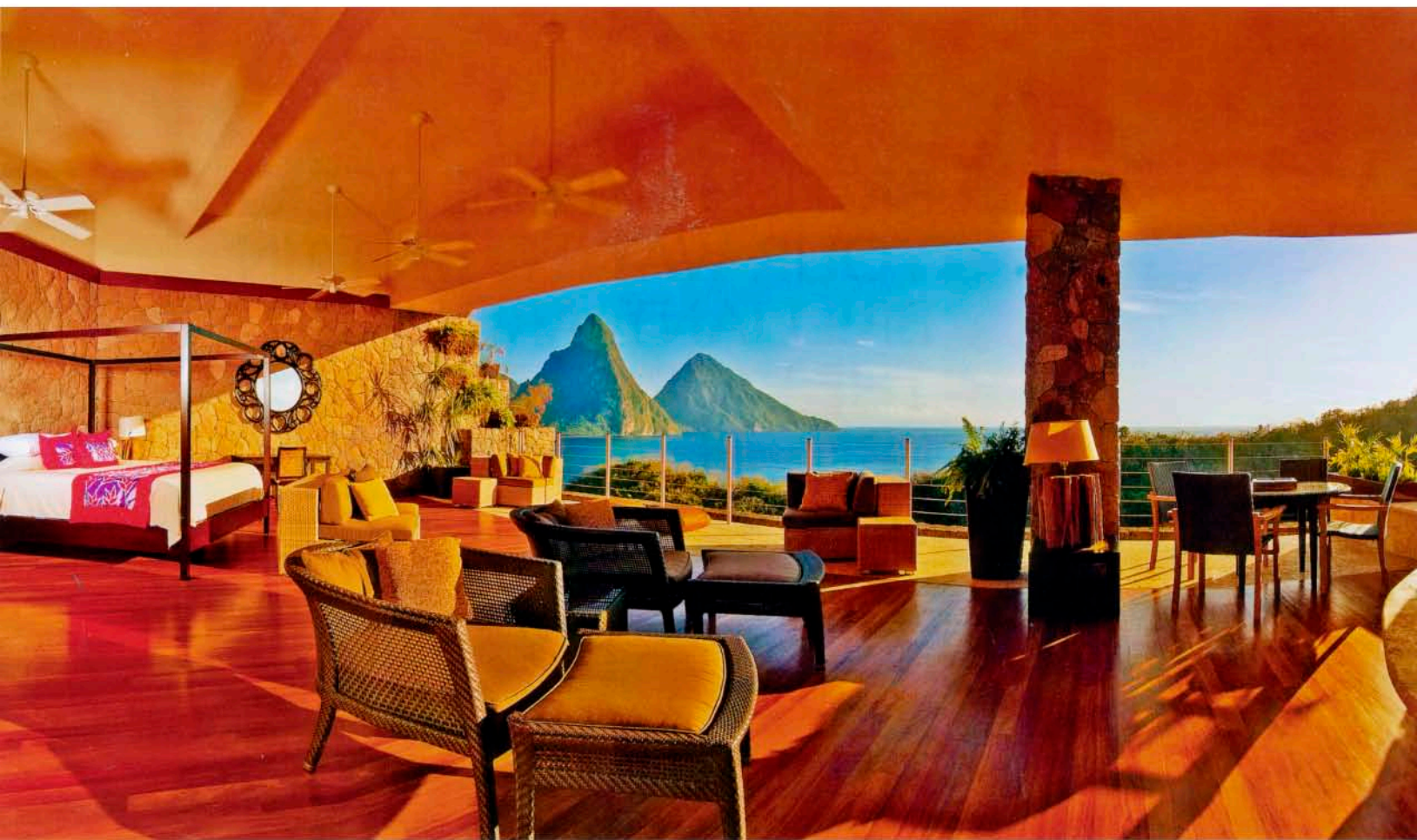


MACO

C A R I B B E A N L I V I N G

US \$7.95 / CAN \$9.05





JADE MOUNTAIN



SET AGAINST THE MAGNIFICENT
PITONS, THIS ST LUCIAN RESORT
IS MORE LIKE A WORK OF
SCULPTURAL ENVIRONMENTAL ART.
KATHERINE ATKINSON
TAKES A TOUR


PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF ANSE CHASTANET

APPROACHED FROM the sea, Nick Troubetskoy's Jade Mountain at Anse Chastanet in St Lucia makes an impression. The exclusive resort hotel emerges from the verdant Morne Chastanet like an intergalactic space station of science fiction film, its shape and structure defying categorisation, adhering to no terrestrial point of reference. Guests to the hotel employ the adjectives "heavenly," "otherworldly" and "divine" to describe their experiences at this new boutique resort. The truth is, however, that there are few places more elementally earthy.

The vista of Jade Mountain, a monumental name inspired in part by owner-architect Nick Troubetskoy's fascination with the gem and the landmark Piton peaks, is deeply affecting. The blush of the variegated stone work evokes Jordan's Petra: raw unpainted concrete and exposed re-bar suggest a project interrupted; and Escher-like staircases and sky bridges on diagonals, descending and disappearing, then re-merging seemingly out of nowhere, suggest a certain surrealism. But the resort while thwarting convention is curiously peaceful. Birds carry on contentedly, their song harmonising with the structure, the sound of cascading water, and the murmur of contentment which must come from the guests happily ensconced in their private sanctuaries.

Harmony is exactly what Troubetskoy is after. His dream was to create a "structure that looks, feels, and is indeed a work of sculptural environmental art". Troubetskoy's vision was for an essentially organic edifice that responded to the landscape and engaged in a dialogue





COMMUNAL TERRACE AREAS AND SKY BRIDGE WALKWAYS ARE LINED WITH CUSTOM-MADE LIMESTONE CORAL TILE, EACH AS UNIQUE AS A FINGERPRINT AND BEARING THE FOSSIL-LIKE SUGGESTION OF THE SUB-AQUATIC WORLD FOR WHICH SOUFRIERE IS ALSO FAMOUS

with its environment. He described this philosophy, "From the start, we wanted Jade Mountain to feel like a natural extension of and a tribute to its island environments. That ethos influenced every aspect of the design, especially when it came to materials selection." The structure features locally mined stone, and local and Caribbean timber and coral, minimally treated and generating an overall earth tone impression.

Volcanic stone, mined in the immediate vicinity, and a variety of over 22 hardwoods, harvested in St Lucia and Guyana, are the featured textures of the resort. The stone appears in various shades of blush and on close inspection reveals a palette as varied as any artist's. Locally crafted jalousie windows and hardwood floors become a focal point, so nuanced and textured are they. A symphonic range of hues from purple to sand come together in purpleheart, mahogany and cedar woods, so as to rouse even the most casual observer into an obsessive tracing of wood grain and colour. For Troubetskoy, these carefully considered selections were about "allowing the island itself to dictate... the colour palette".

Communal terrace areas and sky bridge walkways are lined with custom-made limestone coral tile, each as unique as a fingerprint and bearing the fossil-like suggestion of the sub-aquatic world for which Soufriere is also famous. The sky bridges crisscross dizzyingly around the property and bring guests to and from their rooms. The journey to the sanctuary-like rooms begins at these bridges. Troubetskoy eschewed any conventional notion of corridor passages and was adamant that indoor and outdoor boundaries be blurred. It is in the sanctuaries that this philosophy is best realised.

Jade Mountain rooms read like a dynamic work of art. Hardwood floors lead out past imposing dark wood furniture and the wispy gauze of mosquito nets draped over king-size beds to look over and outwards to the pièce de résistance, spectacular Piton views framed by luxuriant liquid mirrors, infinity pools tiled with custom-made reflective glass. David Knox at Lightstreams in California worked with Troubetskoy to develop these unique glass tiles which refract a thousand points of light, creating an iridescent effect under water and sunlight. The same tiles are carried through in each bathroom and laid smooth, undulating side up and channelling the tiles' true hue. Bathrooms are raised on a dais and designed to allow guests to overlook the pool and enjoy a protected but open connection with the landscape. The design team enlisted European bath and fixture manufacturers Grohe and Duravit to furnish the bathrooms which feature rain head showers and romantic whirlpool tubs with chromatherapy, the very latest in spa technology.

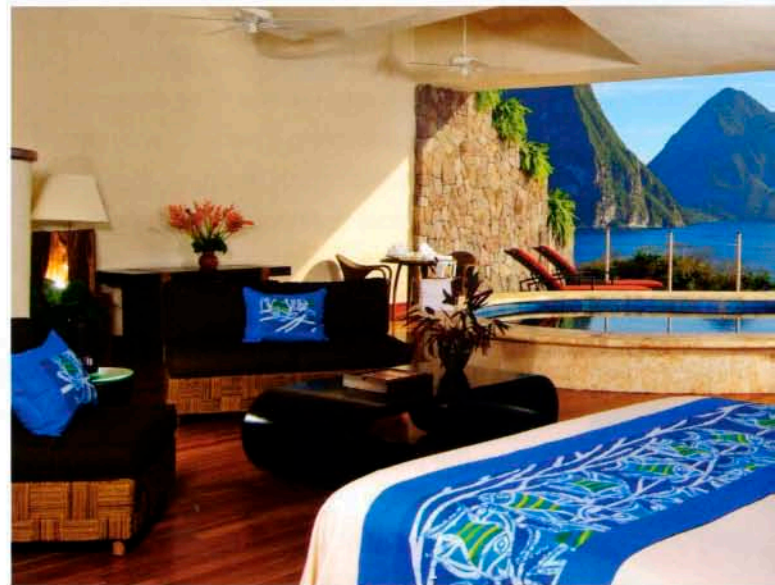
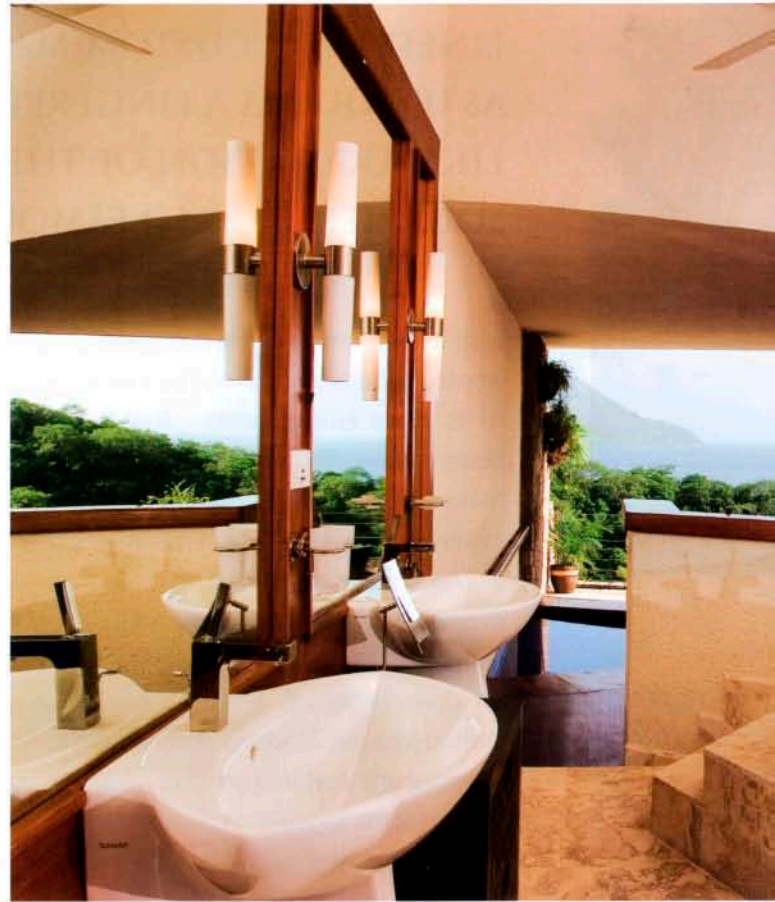
Clockwise:

Tropical hardwoods, volcanic stone and coral tile are employed in homage to the landscape that inspired Jade Mountain; every view frames the dramatic Pitons, the distinction between indoor and outdoor is blurred to breathtaking effect.

While Jade Mountain is often described in the language of art, perhaps its most stunning feature is its relationship with nature's own remarkable sculpture, the awe-inspiring Pitons. Troubetskoy determined that each room interact with the landmark site, so that the fourth wall, by its absence, frames one of the most spectacular scenes in the Caribbean. So affecting are the Piton peaks that whether enshrouded in mist or in crisp sunlit focus, they inspire. Troubetskoy said of the sanctuaries, "I wanted to create environments that enable guests to forget about the furniture or the fact that they're in a hotel room – in essence, to forget about everything but experiencing the psychology of the space on an intuitive level."

Each of the 24 sanctuaries at Jade Mountain is distinct. Industry "cookie cutter" trends had failed to satisfy Troubetskoy who was constantly on the lookout for something unique. He had travelled fairly extensively and stayed in some of the better known resorts worldwide but lamented, "I found myself being disappointed by what I'd encounter." This fuelled his determination that in Jade Mountain, he would challenge convention. No two rooms are designed the same. This commitment to individualised sanctuary design does not simply mean a choice of three-tone colour schemes with variations on a theme of furnishings. Every single room is different, from square footage, pool shape and dimensions, to layout and bathroom fixtures. What every room enjoys in common are the 15-foot ceilings, pools which take guests to the edge and truly stunning views.

If there can be a hierarchy of views at this impressive locale, the Jade Mountain Celestial Terrace is at the pinnacle. The expansive open-air space is luxuriously furnished with lounge furniture that invites leisured reflection and

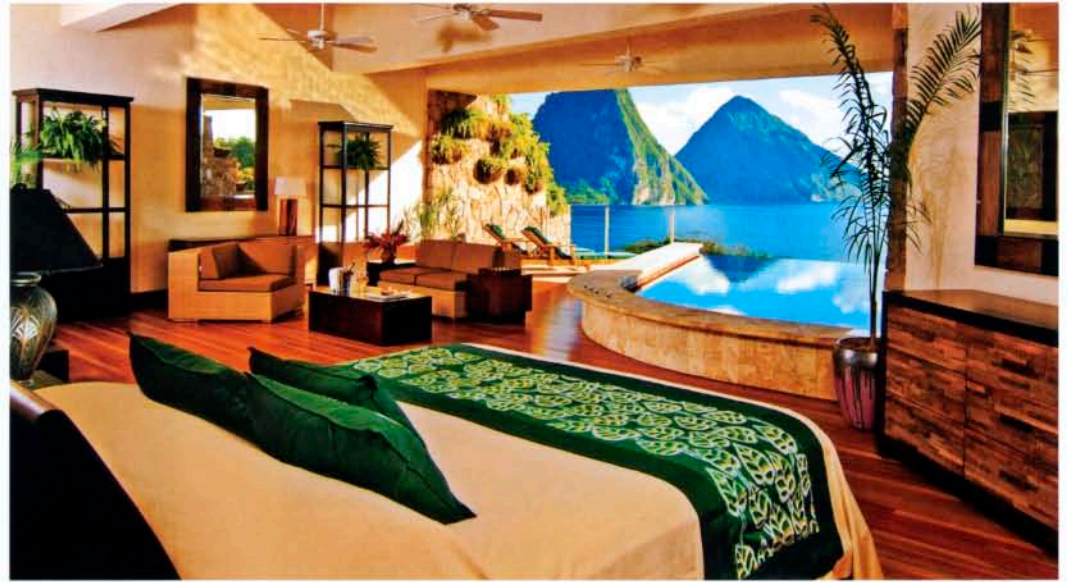


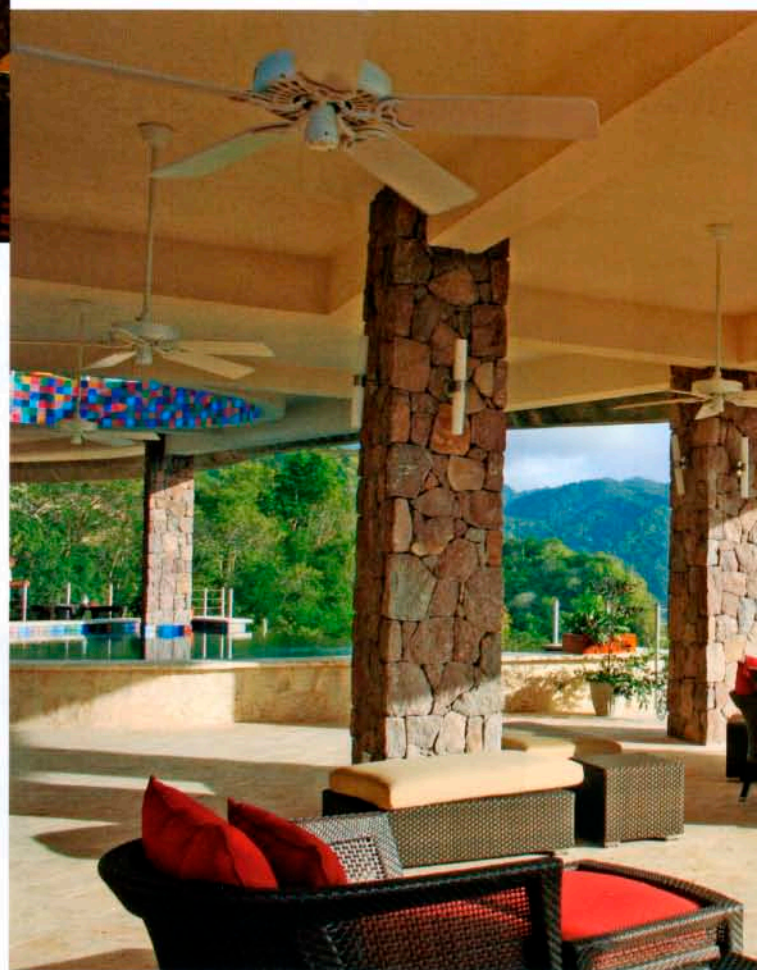
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Clockwise:

Inside-out: spa-like bathrooms look out over the verdant tropical landscape; Jade Mountain's interior design team looked to nature for the perfect palette; there's nothing lacking in the absence of the fourth wall, the majestic Pitons take up the slack; no two rooms are the same and their variety is all the more infinite as each room responds to the change of light





Clockwise:
The waning light flirts playfully with the glassy pool surface and David Knox custom-designed tiles; each Jade Mountain sanctuary takes guests to the edge; the Jade Mountain Club, a communal lounge and dining area



THIS VIEW COMES AT NO SMALL PRICE; IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT THE TERRACE AND EACH SANCTUARY HAD ACCESS TO AN EQUALLY BREATHTAKING VIEW, JADE MOUNTAIN WAS ERECTED AT THE HIGHEST POINT OF THE PRECIPITOUS MORNE CHASTANET IN ST LUCIA'S SOUFRIERE DISTRICT

complete relaxation. It is a coveted spot for yoga practice, sunset drinks and the exchange of wedding vows. Guests enjoy panoramic views, taking in the Anse Chastanet bay to the west, the lush interior to the north and east and the Pitons and town of Soufriere to the south.

This view comes at no small price; in order to ensure that the terrace and each sanctuary had access to an equally breathtaking view, Jade Mountain was erected at the highest point of the precipitous Morne Chastanet in St Lucia's Soufriere district, a decision which, while lauded by those who are fortunate enough to spend time in its resultant suites, presented immense challenges to the architectural team whose mandate it was to manifest Troubetskoy's vision. Troubetskoy refers to Jade Mountain as the ultimate "design solution". The architectural decisions which gave rise to this remarkable feat arose from reactions to construction challenges and setbacks as well as from an unwavering adherence to a philosophy of commitment to ecological integrity.

Jade Mountain arose as an "answer to the challenge of maximising use of the space without consuming the land that made the overall resort so attractive". The site was, Troubetskoy describes, fantastically difficult logically, and concedes that "in fact, the final design only unfolded during construction". He is frank about the organic nature of the process. "We formed things and placed steel and concrete one level at a time, essentially improvising as we moved upward. We did a number of things with Jade Mountain that absolutely defied architectural convention." Troubetskoy likens the process to sculpture. "The resulting designs tended to include lots of curves, few sharp angles and mostly free flowing structures, including the pools. We took no shortcuts in the form of repetitive structural motifs." It was, he says, extremely demanding, "But this is what it took to create a building which is truly a work of art."

At the celestial points of Jade Mountain, jagged configurations of re-bar emerge from raw mason work: part sculpture, part totem and reminder to the architectural and design team that the sky is indeed the limit. **M**

